too seriously, and Lord French accepted our view that the likelihood of such a raid was extremely remote. The Government held that our need for increased food production was much more real and urgent than the need to hold large forces in readiness to deal with a threadbare fantasy. The provision of farm labour from army sources was therefore duly authorised.

Another source of labour was available in the prisoners of war. This was beset with the twofold difficulty that on the one hand the military authorities insisted on very stringent regulations in regard to their escaping, and that on the other hand British farmers were at first very reluctant to avail themselves of this unfamiliar form of assistance. Only by slow degrees was war-prisoner labour introduced ; but it proved so satisfactory that the countryside prejudice against it disappeared, and the War Office presently realised that the danger of prisoners escaping was small. As a matter of fact, they showed no eagerness to escape. By the end of 1917, only one officer and two men had actually made good their escape from the country, and accordingly the Cabinet then decided to relax the conditions under which German prisoners were employed by farmers, and leave their surveillance to the local police. By the autumn of 1918, no fewer than 30,000 German prisoners of war were

employed
on the British countryside, helping us to gather in
our harvest.

But the recruit to our agricultural labour force
who attracted the liveliest interest was undoubtedly
the land girl. Her aid, too, was at first pressed on
the farmers in the teeth of a good deal of sluggish